

**Review Essay:**

***Atlas of the Languages of Suriname***

Edited by Eithne B. Carlin and Jacques Arends

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by

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2002 has been a landmark year for the publication of studies on the languages of the Guianas. In addition to the *Atlas of the Languages of Suriname*, volumes 26/27 of the journal *Amerindia* were issued, devoted to the languages of French Guiana. In Guyana, to which belongs the distinction of having “the highest number of Amerindian groups in one country in the entire Caribbean,” (and the greatest indigenous population), and not Suriname, as asserted by *Atlas* editor, Carlin (43), publications during the year included a *Scholar’s Dictionary and Grammar of the Wapishana Language*, and the on-going compilation into booklets of Makusi-English stories by Makusi teachers, disseminated also on Radio Paiwomak, a community radio station located in Annai, North Rupununi.<sup>1</sup>

More recent additions (2003) to publications on Makusi are *Let’s Read and Write Makusi: A Transition Manual* and *My First Grammar Book* by Miriam Abbott. Some of the contributors to the *Atlas* (K. Boven, M. Patte) and *Amerindia* (F. Grenand, M. Patte, F. Queixalós, O. Renault-Lescure) were also contributors to a seminal collection of papers on indigenous languages of Amazonia, *As línguas amazônicas hoje*, that came out in 2000, and which included reviews of the status of indigenous languages in the three Guianas.

Suriname’s linguistic diversity, however, encompasses not only Old and New World languages but seven original creole languages. The *Atlas’s* nine contributors comprehensively document this small nation’s polyglot status. Nineteen languages survive in the present, though Carlin is not sanguine about the prospects for survival of four of the eight remaining Amerindian languages:

...Akuriyo, Tunayana, Sikiyana and Mawayana will die out in the coming two or three decades, since they are no longer being transmitted to children. Rather, their children learn Trio, the dominant languages in the villages, Kwamalasamutu and Tepu, where these languages are spoken. [Carlin:43]

It is a measure of the world dominance of the English language, however, that although it is not listed as one of Suriname’s 19 languages, English is the medium for all 11 essays/chapters in the *Atlas*. This is not hard to understand since, as the chapters by Arends, Smith and Bruyn document, the bulk of the vocabulary of ‘Sranan tongo’, Suriname’s *lingua franca*, and of four of the six Maroon languages, derives from the English language. In addition, English is everywhere:

On television, programmes such as sports shows and the daily news are presented in Dutch, but foreign (especially North American) programmes are broadcast in the original language, that is, without any subtitling or synchronization. The effect of this situation has become evident over the last few years, since English is gaining popularity, and competence in English within the general Surinamese public has increased dramatically. [Carlin and Arends:285]

Evidence of Suriname's linguistic diversity abounds in the pages of the *Atlas*. Another *Atlas* contributor, Tjon Sie Fat, declares that, "Paramaribo, with up to a dozen languages, is a sociolinguist's paradise. Sranan and Dutch dominate, with Dutch being used in formal and Sranan in informal situations. Stylistically simplified Sranan is also the main inter-ethnic language" (237).

Both specialists and generalists interested in the history, culture and linguistics of the Guiana Shield countries will delight in the *Atlas*, since much of the information contained in this volume is not only pertinent to Suriname. Readers familiar with the pre-colonial and colonial history of the other nation states within this geopolitical region will note many parallels with Suriname's, and in this lies the *Atlas*' comparative value. The book also contains 20 maps, and 50 photographs and illustrations, drawn from archival and contemporary sources, bibliographies, a glossary of linguistic terms and an index. It is an invaluable source of information for students and researchers, and Surinamese at home and in the diaspora, interested in their country's checkered history and its links with the circum-Caribbean area in general.

The volume is divided into three parts, arranged chronologically from indigenous to invented and finally to imported and adapted languages. The first part consists of three

chapters on the eight surviving Amerindian peoples and their languages; the four chapters in part two focus on the seven creole languages; while Part III contains four chapters on the four Eurasian languages.

In the Introduction by Eithne B. Carlin and Jacques Arends, they explain that the aim of this volume is twofold: "first, to introduce the reader to the linguistic complexity that abounds in Suriname, and second, to afford him/her insight into the genesis, evolution, and salient linguistic features of the languages and language families that are represented there" (1). They note that while much has been written on Suriname, especially on its political and economic developments, "few exhaustive studies have been carried out on the multi-faceted cultural aspects of Suriname". In compiling this atlas, Carlin and Arends note, "the authors were often faced with gaps in information—only few of the Surinamese languages can boast a descriptive grammar or up-to-date dictionary" (1). The hope of the editors is that others will take it upon themselves to fill in these gaps by means of future research.

**Chapter I, The Native Population: Migrations and Identities** by Eithne B. Carlin and Karin M. Boven is an historical-anthropological account of Suriname's first peoples. Through historical and ethnographic sources, they reconstruct and chronicle the indigenous experience from first Contact to the present. This opening chapter sets the stage for the more focused linguistic discussions of Cariban and Arawakan languages in the following two chapters. It is invaluable also for its comprehensive listing of sources for the early history of Suriname (and Guyana). The text is elegiac in parts—including a roll call of 13 named nations encountered by Europeans, but who did not survive "the collision of cultures" (12) and were rendered extinct by the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Carlin and Boven trace the main lines of this collision, through which indigenous peoples here, as everywhere else, were destined to suffer the impact of colonialism, some of the survivors becoming its agents over time.

On the Amerindian side, they learned from both first hand and related encounters to differentiate among the European nations seeking a foothold on the ‘Wild Coast’ as the Guiana shoreline was called. From the rate at which small European outposts were raided and razed by rivals, the Amerindians would have guessed that these skirmishes were part of a larger geopolitical battle, which they might have hoped to turn to their benefit. In Chapter IV, Arends mentions the so-called ‘Indian wars’ (1678-1684) when “the Amerindians, sensing an opportunity to get rid of the colonizing power, started attacking them fiercely” (121). The colony was reduced to “a state of complete chaos” (122), giving an impetus to *marronage* in that period.

However, the terms of trade, then and now, were stacked in favour of the economically powerful: non-timber forest products and gold ornaments, later Amerindian slaves, were bartered for European manufactured goods and trinkets, while at the same time, the traders were firmly establishing a more permanent foothold within indigenous territories, starting the process of displacement of local peoples that continues into the present.

*Marronage* or the establishment of villages in the forest by escaped African slaves began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, also resulting over time in pushing Amerindian groups further inland. The Maroons monopolised trade between the interior Amerindians and the coastal Europeans and, in one of many fascinating vignettes in the *Atlas*, Carlin presents an excerpt from an almost extinct “pidgin language that was based on Ndyuka, itself a creole language” which evolved in order to facilitate trading between the Maroons, and the Trio, Wayana, and Caribs”

(24-25). Many invaluable excerpts by the leading authorities in the field are included as boxes in all chapters: in this chapter, one on ceremonial dialogue among the Trio, others on the classification of animal and vegetable food in Wayana, and participant identification in Carib.

For the eight indigenous nations that have survived into the present, the colonial and post-colonial legacy has been bitter: displacement from their territories, socio-economic and political marginalisation, replacement of their belief systems by a proselytising Christian faith, disease, and, more recently, the futile war waged in the interior from 1986 to 1991, in which the Amerindians were used as pawns in a larger power struggle. The chapter hints at the limitations of development aid projects, and the continuing failure by the State to address the centuries-old demand for recognition of indigenous land rights. The pitfalls in attempting to communicate across languages and distinct philosophical systems, the disconnect between coastal and interior Amerindians, and the positioning of various interest groups makes for a fascinating read. For example, Carlin and Boven illustrate “a veritable Babel” that ensued at a meeting convened by the Government in 2000 to discuss the question of land rights:

The Trio and Wayana formed one group with one spokesman, the *granman* (paramount chief) of the Trio. Indeed great was the shock and indignation when the president announced the *granman* of the Trio to be the head of all the Amerindians in Suriname, a decision that after the meeting was quickly reversed for the Kari’na and Arawaks... Since the Trio interpreters are more competent in Dutch than in Sranan, they used Dutch, which then had to be translated into Sranan before being translated into Ndyuka or Saramaccan for the Maroons who use less Dutch: the Trio, for example, in contrast to the Wayana, consider Sranan to be a

low prestige language... The coastal Kari'na and Arawaks, with the exception of the leadership of the Amerindian organisations, are more competent in Sranan than Dutch. [41]

One small correction should be made however: Note 45, on page 45 states that "Warao is, however, still spoken in Venezuela and possibly by a few old speakers in neighbouring Guyana." There are approximately 5,000 Warau in Guyana, of whom at least one-third speak their language.

**Chapter II, Patterns of language, patterns of thought: The Cariban languages,** by Eithne B. Carlin is another of the many gems in this volume. It presents a synoptic overview of the six Cariban languages spoken in Suriname: Kari'na, Trio, Wayana, Akuriyo, Tunayana and Sikiiyana, and discusses the underlying philosophy and structural properties that distinguish the 34-60 Cariban languages that have been studied. Carlin reminds us that areal culture patterns are not matched by linguistic similarities. The reader can marvel at the complex indigenous world in which very dissimilar languages are spoken by neighbouring groups, a phenomenon that is as true of coastal Amerindians (Arawaks and Kari'na and the now extinct Warao) as of the interior peoples.

Carlin's discussion of 'evidentiality, truth and knowledge,' and of the linguistic underpinning of indigenous philosophy should be read by anyone who questions the intrinsic value of preserving languages spoken by small numbers of marginalised indigenous people. In this world, a constant delicate balance has to be negotiated between the fierce individualism of autonomous adults and communal responsibility, all encoded in language. This essay complements Peter Riviere's groundbreaking *corpus* on lowland tropical Amazonian societies, and some of his insights are discussed by Carlin.>>>

The richness of Cariban languages, ranging from marking how an object is located in space, the expression of discrepancy between appearance and reality by means of a grammatical marker, the verbalising of nouns, the nominalising of verbs, the distinctions between a third person coreferential and non-coreferential possessive form, the marking of tense not only on verbs but on nouns and nominal subcategories, to sound symbolism are a treasure trove for linguist and layman alike. Consider the following linguistic feature of nouns, and its implications for the way the world is viewed:

Thus while we easily assign to a noun in English such features as time-stable, concrete or abstract, a noun in the Cariban languages may have quite different properties, that is the semantic equivalents of many nouns are not definable in the same way. In these languages there exists an all-pervading idea of causation: objects do not just exist, they are caused to be there, or they are the result of a process: for example, where we see the noun phrase 'my child' as an entity in and of itself, the Trio, for one, see it as a result of the process of conceiving and giving birth and encode it accordingly as *ji-n-muku* (literally: my borne one). [50-51]

The contrast with Indo-European languages and Western philosophical notions is most evident in notions of soul and being. Carlin provides the linguistic evidence to support the assertions of Viveiros de Castro (1998) on the integrity of the spirit/soul as the unifying element that is manifested in physical diversity. That is, the outer casing of an anima can have various forms, that of a human or of a range of animals. The ecological implications of a world view that is respectful of all manifestations of life are increasingly being explored by a range of disciplines, from natural resources management to medicine.

Another minor caveat: Carlin's claim for Hixkaryana, ("Amazonian languages in general exhibit typological features that are found but seldom in the languages of the world – the Cariban language Hixkaryana of Brazil shot to fame because of its unusual basic word order, Object-Verb-Subject (OVS)" [47]) holds true also for Makushi, another Cariban OVS language spoken in Guyana and Brazil and described by Miriam Abbott (1991, see also Emanuele Amodio and Vicente Pira 1996).

**Chapter III, The Arawak Language,** by Marie-France Patte is a synchronic descriptive linguistic piece on the coastal Arawak (lokono) language. A final inset box on Mawayana is included: an Arawakan language discussed by Carlin. The two editors' notes at the end of the chapter are intriguingly cryptic, hinting at the battles that rage in the world of academia. Patte's description is enriched by her on-going research among Arawak speakers in French Guiana and Guyana. Lokono Arawak is closely related to Garifuna, spoken in Honduras, Guatemala and Belize, and to Guajiro spoken in Venezuela (Payne:374). The geographical range of Arawakan languages extends from central America to Guaná in Paraguay and Terena in southern Brazil. Patte concludes:

The Arawak language, which was attested early on in the conquest is among the few survivors of the indigenous languages of the Caribbean area. It shows a rich grammatical structure and specific semantic categories that are prevalent in other Amazonian languages too. Its original predicative strategy, with different marking for the core arguments, appears to be sensitive to the active/stative parameter. The other participants, as well as the circumstantial complements, are introduced in the sentence by means of a postposed relational element, or relator. A

basic word order can easily be identified, but it can be modified in various ways for discourse strategic purposes. [110]

**Chapter IV, The history of the Surinamese creoles I: A sociohistorical survey** by Jacques Arends moves the story to the *sui generis* creole languages of Suriname, principally the development of Sranan, the *lingua franca*. The four chapters in this section are a must-read for any introductory class on the ethnogenesis of creole languages or on *marronage* in the New World. Remarkably, not one, but seven creole languages, were invented in Suriname, six by the Maroons or escaped African slaves, and one by plantation slaves. Here is Adrienne Bruyn's deft summary of the linguistic history of creole languages in Suriname:

The various creole languages of Suriname are assumed to have a common origin in a contact language in use on the plantations in the coastal area of Suriname in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The lexicon of this variety consisted for the larger part of words derived from English, or more specifically, 17<sup>th</sup> century dialects of English. Over the course of time, it developed into present-day Sranan on the one hand, and, on the other hand, various language varieties spoken among Maroon or Bush Negro groups, made up of former slaves who had escaped from the plantations and settled in the forests of the interior. [155]

Paralleling the chronology set out in the first chapter, the colonial history recounted in Chapters IV and V – that included traffic in human bodies, both Amerindian and African; the switch to an 'agro-industrial economy' underpinned by a harsh slave labour system with resulting high mortality rates, insurrections and *marronage*; free movement of the planter class; extensive layovers in various ports by English sailors;

and Moravian and other missionary activity – extended beyond the geographical boundaries of present day Suriname. Taken together, these chapters also provide a comprehensive listing of the major historical and linguistic sources on the period.

The first settlers in Suriname date back to 1651 when 100 English settlers arrived from Barbados to begin a colony along the Suriname River. However, Africans were in Suriname before 1651–“In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were at least 13 attempts at settlement in the ‘greater Guiana’ area” (115). In consequence, Arends hypothesises that “there is a possibility that some form of creole had started to develop prior to the arrival of the English in 1651” (116). Be that as it may, Arends notes that “as far as the lexicons of the Surinamese creoles are concerned, it is an undisputed fact that English has played a major role in their composition. The proportion of English-derived basic vocabulary has been calculated at some 75% for Sranan and some 50% for Saramaccan” (117). The Portuguese-based lexical element in the Surinamese creoles... has been calculated at some 4% for Sranan and some 35% for Saramaccan (118).

Among the many linguistic and other influences on creole languages mentioned are regional dialects of English until the 1690s, Sephardic Jews from Brazil, Guyana and Europe between 1665 and 1667, the Dutch religious sect, the Labadists, and French Huguenots. In terms of the Jewish population, Arends notes, “from the 1670s until the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews formed no less than one-third of the entire European population” (119). Although the Dutch conquered the colony in 1667, the Dutch did not form a majority of the European population until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. English continued to be spoken until well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and, as mentioned earlier, English sailors apparently spent considerable periods in Suriname.

While European languages influenced the lexicon, African languages spoken along the Slave Coast (the coastal areas of Togo, Benin and Eastern Ghana) and ‘Loango’ (the coastal areas of Zaire, Congo and Northern Angola) provided the template of the creole languages. Arends notes that in an eight-year period, the slave population had increased ten-fold: in 1683, there were an estimated 1,000 African slaves in Suriname. By 1691, almost 10,000 more had been transported to Suriname. The forced system of labour made Suriname (and all plantation colonies) a veritable death factory: while an estimated 215,000 Africans were transported to Suriname between 1651 and 1830, the Black population did not exceed 50,000 at the time of emancipation in 1863. Arends writes that “even as late as 1750, three out of every four blacks in Suriname (apart from the Maroons) had been born in Africa. This means that one hundred years after the beginning of the colony, Sranan was still a second rather than a first language for three quarters of the population” (123). Given this rate of population turnover, it was no wonder that “in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sranan had not yet crystallized into a fully stabilized creole” (124), a development Arends dates to around 1775.

The uniqueness of Suriname is that while slavery was equally harsh everywhere, Maroons established successful strongholds in the Guiana forests. The existence of Maroons in the Suriname interior was recorded from the 1670s. In 1700 there were an estimated 1,000 Maroons, a number that had increased to an estimated 6,000 by 1750. By 1765, the Maroons had been pacified and peace treaties signed. From that time on, the reporting of escaped slaves became obligatory. Emancipation did not come for Surinamese slaves until 1863, thirty years after abolition in the English colonies.

There are many similarities between the colonial history of Dutch and British

Guiana – including the system of sugar production based on plantation slavery, Moravian missionary work among indigenous and later other groups in both colonies, the importation of indentured labour from Asia (which began earlier in British Guiana), and the declaration of compulsory primary education in 1876 in both territories. On that date, Dutch was officially designated as the language of instruction in Surinamese schools. Between the 1880s and 1940s, an ‘anti-Sranan’ campaign was in force, reinforcing the language’s low social status. In 1954, Suriname was granted partial autonomy, followed in 1975 by independence. An exodus of 200,000 Surinamese to Holland followed, and the import of that development for language change is explored in Part III of the *Atlas*.

**Chapter V, The history of the Surinamese creoles II: Origin and Differentiation** by Norval Smith is written in a didactic ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ style. It covers the same ground as the preceding chapter, but assumes the stance of an investigative reporter on the issue of the putative origins of these creole languages. It also alludes to some scholarly disagreements. Both writers explore the genesis of Sranan: Arends sees it as *sui generis*, emerging in Suriname, while Smith explores the sociohistorical context in more detail. Smith posits that Sranan had its roots in a pan-Caribbean English-derived pidgin, containing African lexical items, that was creolised during the 30 years between 1651 and 1680. He supports his arguments for an original pidgin language by referring to the use of Kari’na by the earliest group of Maroons (around 1660), and a parallel phenomenon in the genesis of the Garifuna language, originally of St Vincent, but now spoken by the transported Garifuna population in Central America. All this scholarly speculation

suggests that the jury is still out on whether the substrate language of these creoles was English or African.

Smith has an investigator’s bent, and comes up with racy formulations, enclosed in quotation marks, perhaps because his hypotheses are not yet part of the dominant narrative: in addition to ‘Caribbean Plantation Pidgin English,’ ‘Ingredient X’ is the term he uses to describe ‘a sizable group of African lexical items’, and so on. Smith posits that Sranan, ‘Jamaican Maroon Spirit Language’ and Krio in Sierra Leone are all derived from ‘Caribbean Plantation Pidgin English’ (134). He argues:

Virtually all the creoles spoken in the Caribbean area, together with Guyanese, and the various creoles of Suriname, share such a number of striking features of grammar, phonology and lexicon, that these parallels cannot be explained as accidental. [134]

The two writers also disagree on the provenance of the Jewish migration into Suriname, with Smith maintaining that the linguistic evidence points to Pernambuco in Brazil being the point of origin. He argues convincingly that “a solid linguistic piece of evidence must always take precedence over a sociohistorical construct” (137), particularly since archival sources are few. Smith sets out the seven named forms of creole, into three groups:

1. the language of the former plantation area – Sranan;
2. the language of Maroons who fled between 1712 and 1800 – Ndyuka, Aluku, Paramaccan and Kwinti; and
3. the language of Maroons who fled between 1690 and 1710 – Saramaccan and Matawai.

Saramaccan and Matawai described by Smith as ‘Western Maroon’ languages have many

words derived from Portuguese, while the other four, 'Eastern Maroon' languages, closely resemble each other and are also referred to as Ndyuka (155).

Smith lists two other Maroon groups: Karboegers later called Muraato, who spoke Kari'na (the first Maroon group) and Brosunengre or Brooskampers. Smith notes that the word *kabúgru* was glossed in a 1779 Saramaccan vocabulary as 'nation living on the Coppename, which is derived from Indians and Negroes' (142), and that its etymology perhaps goes back to a Tupi word. Corroboration for its Brazilian derivation comes from the fact that this word also appears in a number of travellers' accounts of the interior peoples on the British Guiana/Brazil frontier, and was used to describe the same inter-ethnic mixture. 'Cobungrus' were described by Everard Im Thurn as 'half-breeds between negroes and Indians... These latter retain the many good qualities of the Indian, and to these they add the few good qualities, such as physique and strength of the West Indian negro' (1883: 8). Im Thurn's unabashed racism was common in the writings of the colonial period.

**Chapter VI, the structure of the Surinamese creoles** by Adrienne Bruyn is an excellent linguistic piece in which she focuses on "the historical origins of the lexicon and to structural aspects in which the creoles differ from their main lexifier language, English, while occasionally pointing out similarities with the main African sub-strate languages—Gbe and Kikongo" (p. 154-155). As might be expected, Amerindian words for items of material culture and biodiversity were adopted into the creole languages. She demonstrates, however, that these creole languages, whether English or Portuguese-influenced, have very similar syntactic structures. Bruyn also alludes to Guyanese creolese: "another English-based creole

spoken by a substantial number of people in Suriname" (156), particularly in the western rice growing district of Nickerie.

Bruyn's text is rich with examples that illustrate how "as a result of the interplay of simplification of the lexifier input, phonological characteristics of the African substrate languages, and internal developments, the phonological shapes of words in the present-day creole languages often differ considerably from the source forms" (162). She, and other contributors allude often to the fluid language situation that prevails in Suriname:

In the languages as they are spoken today, it is not always easy to distinguish between full borrowing, involving established incorporation and adaptation of a word from another language – be it Dutch, English, Sarnami, Guyanese, or any other language – and code-mixing, where, rather, a speaker uses a word or a larger unit from another language incidentally and without fully adapting it to the phonological and morphological rules of the recipient language. [165]

Bruyn concludes:

Influence from the substrate languages appears undeniable, not only with regard to vocabulary and phonology but also certain aspects of morphology and syntax. That is not to say, however, that the creole languages are more or less straightforward continuations of substrate languages, just as they are not straightforward continuations of the lexifier languages. They are new languages, created around items deriving from the lexifier languages but lending those items new functions. The substrate languages may have provided models for certain aspects of the grammar and the function words playing a role therein, but they constitute only one component in the linguistic edifice constructed by people who were in need of a new language as part of a new culture



because they had been torn away from their own. [181]

**Chapter VII, Young languages, old texts: Early documents in the Surinamese creoles** by Jacques Arends is a bibliophile's delight. Its documentation of the admirable linguistic work in Sranan and Saramaccan of the Herrnhuter or Moravian Brethren, particularly Christian Schumann, complements the work on the Guyana side of the late Joel Benjamin (1988, 1991). These Moravian missionaries, a German-speaking group of dissenting Protestants,

came to Suriname in 1735, during the first three decades they confined their missionary activities to the Amerindian population, extending it to the Saramaka Maroons in 1765 and to the slave population even later. As a prerequisite for their missionary work they not only learned the local languages but they also translated religious texts and compiled dictionaries and grammars. As a result, they left us an extremely valuable legacy of documents in and on the Surinamese creole languages, from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. [183]

Arends also pays tribute to three visionaries in this story: the missionary Schumann in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Moravian convert, Johannes King in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and teacher Jacques 'Papa' Koenders in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On Schumann's pioneering linguistic insights, Arends writes that,

He was ahead of his time in using native speaker informants for his lexicographical work. He was also a very acute observer of sociolinguistic phenomena, which appears from his observations on the differences between nengre tongo and bakra tongo, between the urban and the rural varieties, and between the language of the older and more recently established plantations. Apart from his gift for

sociolinguistic observation, Schumann also had a keen insight into purely linguistic phenomena. To give just one example, he was the first to observe the phenomenon of logophoricity in Sranan, something which seems to have gone completely unnoticed ever since. Put simply, a logophoric language uses two different pronouns to indicate whether the subject of a main clause containing a verb of saying is identical to the subject of the embedded clause or not. [192-3]

Arends notes further that "logophoric pronouns are also a feature of Ewe, the major West African language spoken by slaves brought to Suriname" (193).

The reader too can contemplate with respect Johannes King (c. 1830-1890),

the first truly Surinamese author... a mixed Matawai-Ndyuka Maroon who became a member of the Moravian Church in 1861. King, who reputedly taught himself how to read and write, is a most intriguing figure, standing with one foot in the world of Christianity and with the other in that of Maroon culture. In his writings, parts of which have been published, King deals not only with the story of his life, travel reports, and Maroon history, but also... with more personal topics such as his dreams and visions. He also wrote a Dresi boekoe 'Book of medicine', a book which is still privately owned, which includes secret knowledge of certain medicinal herbs and plants. [197]

In this chapter, Arends also presents excerpts from texts from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century left by travellers, colonial administrators, soldiers, planters, poets, even some Maroons and slaves. There is also the iconoclastic African Surinamese teacher, Jacques 'Papa' Koenders, who challenged the social stigmatization of Sranan, which continued until after the Second World War,

in his monthly publication, *Foetoeboi*, a one-man production written in Sranan (129, 189).

### Part III. The Eurasian languages.

The linguistic and social history of the Eurasian languages presented in Part III display many fascinating similarities. As with the creole languages, all four – Surinamese Dutch, Kejia, Sarnami Hindi and Javanese – are regarded as inferior to the mother tongues, particularly by their own speakers. Nevertheless, the contributors in this section show that these are all languages in their own right, spoken today by significant minorities or, as in the case of Surinamese Dutch, as a second language acquired in school by all Surinamese.

Between 1863 and 1942 some 70,000 Asian contract labourers were brought to Suriname, only a minority of whom returned to their home countries after their contracts had expired (127). Dutch colonialism was tolerant when compared with the British variety so the story of commercial and socio-cultural associations, education and schools and publications in these imported Asian languages will remind readers in the English speaking Caribbean of how hegemonic and narrow minded British colonialism was in comparison. The influence of Suriname's other languages, particularly Sranan on Surinamese Dutch, and such sociolinguistic processes as 'levelling', 'simplification' and code switching are explored in these chapters. Sarnami and Javanese show minimal influences from Sranan or Dutch: these were the latest migrations, dating from the 1870s to the beginning of the Second World War, and their speakers tended to be isolated in discrete rural, agricultural settings in coastal Suriname.

Today, the Asian languages are spoken by sizable minorities: the Sarnami-speaking population is estimated to be between 180,000, and 230,000 in both

Suriname and The Netherlands; the Javanese Surinamese population was 62,000 in 1997, or 14% of the population of Suriname; while the number of Kejia speakers in Suriname today is estimated to be 6,000 out of 12,000 ethnic Chinese. Wolfowitz's summary of the situation of Surinamese Javanese resonates with that of the other language groups, as detailed in these chapters:

For the Javanese speakers of Suriname, the repertoire of Javanese speech style forms only a part of the total speech repertoire. Sranan, the English-based creole language, is used for most dealings outside the Javanese community, and most of the young-adult generation also use Dutch, having learned it in school. The use of Javanese thus represents a choice among alternative codes. As in the case of immigrant groups elsewhere, the use of the 'home language', in any politeness style, itself expresses a sense of community, an echo of close politeness. In business and official settings, typically associated with a distant-polite style of speaking, Dutch or Sranan is normally required (particularly, of course, if non-Javanese speakers are present). Conversely, to senior kin, or fictive kin, appropriate respect requires the use of Javanese, even if at the most minimal level of respect style. [277]

### Chapter VIII, Surinamese Dutch, by

Christa de Kleine is as much sociological as linguistic as it turns the lens on issues of class and urban/rural divides, 'old' families speaking Dutch versus Asian newcomers speaking Chinese, Hindi and Javanese, and the place of the mother tongue in this story from 1667 to the present. De Kleine argues that Surinamese Dutch (SD) is a truly distinct language variety in its own right, with its own distinct grammar, phonology, pronunciation and semantics. She lists the contributing factors – not only geographical distance from

the mother tongue, but the influence of Suriname's highly multilingual environment, and the fact that Surinamese Dutch is an acquired second (or third) language for many speakers. Wisely, the Ministry of Education declared Dutch officially to be a second language in schools and urged educators to treat it as such (216), an approach that should be emulated in neighbouring Guyana with respect to English.

In common with most of the contributors to this volume, she combines history and linguistics in a seamless narrative. We learn that throughout most of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sranan, and not Dutch, was used as the medium of social interaction by most of the nationally diverse white population. Dating from late in this period, however, use of Dutch became a marker of social class, particularly among the growing numbers of free Blacks and Mixed people. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "an elite social class had started to form among the non-whites, who without any doubt were native speakers not only of Sranan, but also of Dutch" (213). After the introduction of compulsory primary education in 1876, Dutch was made the only medium of instruction in schools, accelerating the process of structural influences from the other languages, particularly Sranan, on Dutch as well as "features typically associated with second language learning" (214).

At the same time, de Kleine outlines the hegemonic role of Dutch in Suriname, reinforced among other ways by the large Surinamese diaspora in The Netherlands, transmission of Dutch television and radio programmes and tertiary education in Europe.

**Chapter IX, Kejia: A Chinese language in Suriname** by Paul Brendan Tjon Sie Fat moves the story from Europe to Asia, and the place of the more recent incoming languages in the Surinamese patchwork. His essay concentrates on distinct waves of

Chinese migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries while providing at the same time confirmation of de Kleine's arguments on the indexing of class by language use, code switching and the ghettoized nature of in-group use of ethnic languages. In his words,

The other languages are virtually only spoken by members of different ethnic groups, and are often used to define ethnic identity. However, language contact among the various groups in Paramaribo is not uniform. The upper classes mix freely, but outside of the elite, social relations tend to remain within the ethnic group. Chinese are very often treated as foreigners with no particular bond with Suriname, other than economic. [237]

The Chinese for the most part are described as detached from the class consciousness of Paramaribo. They are "not interested in acquiring Dutch, since they are focussed on the social order of Chinese culture rather than on social mobility within Surinamese society as a whole" (237). They learn Sranan and code-switch in a multi-lingual context.

The first wave of overseas Chinese in Suriname tended to come from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. Most of them were of Hakka origin and many still speak Kejia, the Chinese language strongly associated with the Hakka ethnic group (233). Chinese migration from the Middle Kingdom had been impelled by economic and social upheavals in the homeland:

In China, the period of the 1850s and 1860s was dominated by the Second Opium War (1856-1860) and the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864). Faced with such social conditions, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century about two and a half million Chinese left China for overseas destinations. While the vast majority migrated to South East Asia, about 270,000 went to Latin America and the Caribbean as indentured labourers; 87 % of these went to Cuba and Peru, while 6

% went to Panama, Costa Rica, the Dutch and French Caribbean, Brazil and other places. [233]

The Chinese were the first Asian immigrants into Suriname following Emancipation, a trajectory similar to Guyana's, one important difference being that abolition had been decreed thirty years earlier in the British overseas colonies. As in Guyana, the Chinese did not remain on the plantations, quickly moving into commercial activities:

The planned abolition of slavery in Suriname in 1863 made it necessary to find ways to make up for the predicted labour shortage on the sugar plantations, sugar being the main crop there. Indentured labour was considered the solution, and a number of unsuccessful trials were made with labourers of a number of different nationalities. As a result of privatization of labour recruitment in 1862, at that time China remained as the sole source of indentured labour for Suriname. More than 2,500 Chinese were brought to Suriname between 1853 (the year of the first experiments with Chinese indentured labour from Java) and 1870. Virtually all of the first immigrants were men, and all were assigned to the sugar plantations. Chinese indentured labour in Suriname was stopped in 1870 because most migrants failed to extend their contracts, and none of those who stayed in Suriname worked in agriculture...Those who stayed, moved to the capital Paramaribo, and many took wives from other ethnic groups, in particular from the majority Creole sector. While some sent their sons to Guangdong to receive a Chinese education, most of the children from these mixed marriages were absorbed into the urban Creole group, starting the long ethnic association of Creoles and Chinese in Suriname. [233-4]

The majority of former British colonial subjects will probably involuntarily compare the results of the rigid imposition of monolingualism by the British on their subjects to Tjon Sie Fat's summary of Chinese migration in the 1870-1939 period, a comparison in which the British experience falls far short of Dutch tolerance across the Corentyne River. In Suriname, on the other hand,

After 1870, a broader migration of Hakkas...to Suriname took hold. The Chinese community in Suriname grew through chain migration from a core of indentured labourers...By the time of the Japanese invasion of China, before World War II, a thriving Chinese speaking community existed in Suriname. This can be inferred from the fact that Chinese script was used on gravestones and Chinese was spoken during funeral ceremonies, and from the existence of Chinese commercial and socio-cultural associations, Chinese churches, Chinese-language education (written Chinese, taught in the Kejia vernacular) for Chinese children in Chinese schools, Chinese-language media, and at least two consecutive generations with a basic passive and active knowledge of Kejia. Due to the chaos before World War II, migration to Suriname came to a virtual halt, and from then on Surinamese Chinese became relatively isolated from linguistic and cultural developments in China, in particular those in the eastern Pearl River Delta. [234-5]

Suriname and Guyana have had the same experience with the most recent waves of Chinese immigration which began between 1963 and 1970. This grew mainly through immigration from southern China via Hong Kong, and up to 1968,

as many as one in twenty Chinese in Suriname was an immigrant. Many immigrants viewed Suriname as a

stopover on the way to other places...It was not uncommon for newcomers to identify themselves as Cantonese speakers in order to differentiate themselves from the local, older settled group of Hakka. [235-236]

The Peoples Republic of China eased barriers to emigration in the 1980s, at the time of the economic reforms, as a result of which, “Chinese immigration to Suriname increased sharply in the 1990s, and Chinese immigrants to Suriname were no longer exclusively Hakka... the number of non-Hakka ethnic Chinese in Suriname is growing... While Kejia remains the dominant Chinese language in Suriname, Mandarin (the mainland Chinese standard, Guoyu) is now increasingly used as a lingua franca within the Surinamese Chinese community, due to the significant, and apparently growing number of speakers of several other Chinese languages and dialects...” (236).

The cultural hegemony of closer links with the mother country prevails in the case of Chinese languages, as with European Dutch, and Sarnami Hindi. Cantonese, the language of the newcomers, has now superseded Kejia as “the public medium during gatherings and cultural events of ethnic Hakkas in Suriname” (237).

**Chapter X, Sarnami as an immigrant koiné** by Theo Damsteegt is a fascinating account of East Indian migration to Suriname:

Between 1873 and 1916, some 34,000 indentured labourers left northern India for Suriname...the labourers brought with them several mutually related languages (or dialects) from their home country, amongst which Bhojpuri, Magahi and Avadhi. The ensuing interaction among these migrants gave rise to a process of mixing of the different languages that were their mother tongues, a process that

eventually resulted in a new, stabilised language which is not identical to any language in India, and which nowadays is called Sarnami Hindi or Sarnami Hindustani. [249]

Sarnami is a koiné type of language because it is “characterized ... by a mixture of forms of relatively closely related Indic languages. Koiné is defined by Jeff Siegel as “a stable linguistic variety which results from contact between varieties which are subsystems of the same linguistic system” (254). The study of Sarnami and other koinés provides linguists with clues on language formation and evolution. Neither Sranan nor Dutch is found to have had much influence on the early development of Sarnami though there is intensive code-switching in present day usage.

According to Damsteegt, from the mid 1970s, Sarnami speakers in The Netherlands have been promoting its use “in more formal language domains, for example, in written fictional and non-fictional texts” (251).

This chapter also includes a Box on the Telugu-speaking Madraji who comprised a minority of the Indian immigrants to both Dutch and British Guiana. Their language was unintelligible to the Hindi-speaking majority, and it died out after two generations. In Suriname most Madraji converted to Catholicism.

**Chapter XI, Javanese speech styles in Suriname** by Clare Wolfowitz gives us a privileged peek into the complex, esoteric world of Javanese, with its extensive repertoire of ‘ordinary’ versus ‘polite’ speech styles, and the many-nuanced distinctions and levels between mere ‘speaking’ and ‘language’.

Javanese immigration into Suriname began in 1890 and continued until 1939. The move was essentially from one village context to another and Wolfowitz argues that the less

extensive range of their current speech styles probably reflects the more egalitarian context of village life in Java and Suriname as much as the half century's isolation from the mother country. In her words, "we perhaps see the use of speech styles fulfilling their core social function – that of defining and ordering the relationships of family, household, and neighbourhood" (280).

A good place to end this review is by presenting one final illustration from Wolfowitz of the use of linguistics in social positioning and in-group jostling, as the local and the global increasingly converge and clash:

The most striking feature of Javanese cultural conservatism, however, has to do with religious practice. The first mosques built by Surinamese Javanese immigrants were unadorned rectangular structures which faced, not eastward toward Mecca, but westward – that is, as mosques in Java are oriented. In the 1960s, the worldwide movement toward 'purer' Islamic practice had its impact on Surinamese Javanese religious life, and reformist groups built temples of their own which faced eastward, while adopting at the same time more orthodox Muslim forms of prayer. The relationship between the traditional Javanese mosques and the reformist mosques was characterized by mutual disdain and sometimes overt hostility. Language, too, participates in this religious division: while the reformist mosques emphasize the use of Arabic in prayer, the conservative, west-facing mosques pray using an old-fashioned, literary Javanese, almost as impenetrable to the congregation as Arabic would be. For these conservative adherents, the Muslim rituals function not only as a form of religious worship but also as a gesture of devotion to the homeland. [266]

The *Atlas* is an excellent omnibus volume for anyone interested in Suriname in particular or, more generally, in exploring the

linguistic responses of the subaltern colonised world to the colonial project of domination. For the English-reading world, it offers an unparalleled view through a linguistic exploration of this local to global trajectory, set in one of the world's lesser studied and traversed places, the ancient pre-Cambrian landscape of the Guiana Shield.

If you want to order this publication, please contact:

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#### Notes:

1. Guyana is home to nine Amerindian nations, totalling over 50,000 persons, as compared with Suriname's 10,000. This includes 6 surviving Carib-speaking peoples, whose population numbers follow their names (Makusi 9,000; Patamona 5,000; Karinya 5,000; Akawaio 5,000; Arekuna 500 and Waiwai 200), 2 Arawakan-speaking peoples (Lokono Arawaks 15,500 and Wapishana 7,000) and Warau 5,000 .

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